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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to drastic changes in the workday of academics and universities have experienced a radical shift towards becoming more digital. Restrictions have led universities to force their employees to work from home and implement digital tools as a part of their workday. This radical implementation of digital tools and remote work have been challenging, as many struggled to cope and adapt to the new situation. This perceived challenge seems to have increased the already high level of stress and demotivation among academics. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effects the COVID-19 pandemic and the following digital changes have had on the motivation and well-being of academics in higher education. These effects will be investigated in the light of change theory, the Self-determination theory, and the Job Demands-Resource model. Additionally, we will also look at how our findings are relevant for the future work of academics, and whether the "new normal" is the way of working going forward.

In this study we have conducted a qualitative study of eight academics from different universities in Norway. Our data was obtained through semi-structed in-depth interviews on Zoom. Further, this data was analyzed with the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The results of our analysis indicated that the pandemic and the following digital changes have had both positive and negative effects on academics' motivation and well-being. Our findings suggest that the academics have experienced a loss in their main motivational factor, social relations, because of the pandemic. However, the findings also show that implementation of remote work and digital tools gave them more flexibility, which they found motivating. Further, there was a general agreement that they want to maintain some aspects of the pandemic and the following digital changes going forward. Based on these findings, implications are discussed. Additionally, limitations and suggestions for future research are also provided.

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1. Introduction

For this master thesis we have conducted a qualitative study with in-depth interviews to explore how the COVID-19 pandemic and the following digital changes have affected the motivation and well-being of academics. In this introductory chapter we will first enlighten the motivation and background for studying this topic, followed by the research question and aim of the study. Lastly, this chapter will end with a presentation of the structure which the thesis will follow.

1.1 Motivation and background for thesis

Over the last decades, digitalization has had a huge impact on organizations and how they operate. However, with the current COVID-19 pandemic we have seen the digital transformation of organizations reaching new heights. The sudden rise of the pandemic resulted in an economic ripple effect, causing a significant increase in the unemployment rate, large-scale changes to organizations´ business operations, and substantial modifications to work and management styles (Johns Hopkins University, 2020). As a result, many organizations have been forced to drastically adopt new internal working practices and felt a strong pressure to implement solutions through digital channels (Lund, et al., 2021).

Digital tools such as Zoom and Teams, as well as remote work have become a crucial part and changed the way of working for many employees and organizations (Leonardi, 2020). For instance, Zoom, had 10 million daily meeting participants in December 2019, but by April 2020 that number had risen to over 300 million (Evans, 2020). Thus, it has been essential to redesign management and collaboration models to ensure that no one within organizations is left behind and feels omitted from this digitalization process (Almeida et al., 2020). Organizational change, unplanned change in particular, can cause many issues and lead to questions and uncertainties for employees, which may affect their motivation and relationship with the organization (Li et al., 2021). Therefore, to successfully implement and minimize the negative consequences of such changes, a deep understanding of employees´ attitudes

and behaviors toward the change is critical (Shin et al., 2012; Lund et al., 2021).

One of the biggest changes during the COVID-19 outbreak is that remote work has become the new way of working for millions of employees around the world. Early estimates from Eurofound stated that due to the pandemic, around 50% of Europeans at least partially worked from home. In contrast this number was approximately 12% prior to the situation (Eurofound, 2020). Research prior to the pandemic has shown that remote work can positively affect employee well-being when it provides them with greater flexibility, increases productivity, improves the balance between their work and home lives, and reduces time and energy on long commutes (Mann & Holdsworth, 2003; Allen et al., 2015). Conversely, working remotely can also result in intensification of work and a decreased ability to "switch off" from work (Felstead & Henseke, 2017). However, these effects may not be completely related to the unplanned remote working implementations established to manage the COVID-19 crisis (Galanti et al., 2021).

Normally, adopting this way of working has been introduced as a planned choice that demands a period of design, preparation, and adaptation to allow organizations to effectively support employees´ productivity and make the work-life balance better (Galanti et al., 2021). However, as a result of the pandemic, several workers had to switch drastically to remote work without any preparation. New technology and digital tools were rapidly implemented without any form of introduction or extensive training, causing more uncertainty in an already uncertain situation (Li et al., 2021). For many this resulted in challenges since the use of technology when working remotely is crucial in maintaining the success of performing job tasks, and discussing work-related issues (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). Hence, employees that struggled to adapt to these changes may have experienced negative effects on their motivation and well-being.

1.1.2 Higher education

One sector that has been heavily impacted by the pandemic and the following digital changes is the academic sector. Due to the pandemic, universities worldwide had to instantly move from physical to virtual classrooms, and find new ways of teaching and doing research (Pozo et al., 2021). Hence, academics´ workday was totally changed from one day to the next. Digital tools such as Zoom, and Teams were immediately introduced to perform and communicate job tasks that were commonly done physically. However, due to the drastic changes and lack of time to plan these, many struggled to cope and adapt to the new situation. Hence, these changes seem to have increased the already high level of stress and demotivation among academics (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Burić and Kim (2020) suggest that this could be a result of the pandemic leading to exhaustion by creating less confidence in their ability to do their jobs and making it more difficult to manage student behavior.

Moreover, these changes are also seen to have had an impact on their motivation (Rietvald et al., 2021). Han and Yin (2016) states that academics´ motivation is usually derived from the intrinsic values of teaching. The pandemic has resulted in loss of physical interactions with both students and colleagues, and thereby made the teaching more distant and for many more challenging (Radu et al., 2020). Further, this increased physical distance can also make building relationships, an essential element of motivation, more challenging (Rose & Adams, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In accord with these lines of reasoning, this thesis will study how urgent changes such as the pandemic and the following digital changes could affect academics' motivation and well-being. Looking at the effects of the pandemic and the following digital changes is interesting due to the historical high levels of physical presence in their work tasks and workday. However, with the pandemic, most of these tasks have been forced into a digital format. Hence, making a drastically change in a well-established working sector.

1.2 Research question and aim

The aim of this master thesis is to investigate the effects the COVID-19 pandemic and the following digital changes have had on the motivation and well-being of academics. The main research question will thus be as follow;

RQ: *How has the Covid-19 pandemic and the following digital changes affected academics' motivation and well-being in higher education in Norway?*

In order to answer this question, our main focus will be to study academics' experience and the pandemics impact on their motivation and well-being, as well as their perception of the change process at their university. Hence, the purpose of the thesis is to explore whether the pandemic and the following digital changes have improved or harmed the motivation of academics, and whether it has positively or negatively affected their well-being. Further, we are also interested to look at how our findings are relevant for the future work of academics, and whether the "new normal" is the way of working going forward.

1.3 Thesis structure

This master thesis consists of six main chapters. In this first chapter, we have established an introduction of the background for studying this topic, as well as the research question and the aim of the thesis. In the second chapter, we will present the theoretical background for our selected topic, which is based on previous literature regarding organizational change, and employee's motivation and well-being. In the third chapter, we will enlighten the methodology and methods used to collect data in order to answer our research question. Further, the methodology together with our theoretical framework will lay the foundation for our fourth chapter, analysis and findings. Here we will present the empirical findings from our qualitative in-depth interviews we conducted with academics. In the fifth chapter, we will discuss our main findings alongside our theoretical framework. Finally, we will conclude our thesis by presenting our summary, as well as deliberate on limitations, implications, and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Digitalization

Because of the pandemic, organizations have experienced a paradigm shift regarding digitalization and usage of digital tools (Almeida et al., 2020). Digitalization has been identified as one of the major trends changing society and industries in the near- and long-term future (Parviainen et al., 2017). The impact of today´s digitalization has led to several authors referring to today´s time period as the fourth industrial revolution or industry 4.0 (Schwab, 2017; Dalenogare et al., 2018; Oztemel & Gursev, 2018). This revolution is characterized by new technologies merging physical, digital, and biological worlds, and by this impacting economies, industries, and our way of living (Schwab, 2017). Hence, the ability to adapt and keep up with the development of digital technology has become a crucial part of an organization´s everyday life.

In the literature, the term digitalization is often referred to as a further developed and more complicated phenomenon of digitization (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016; Parviainen et al., 2017; Rachinger et al., 2018). Digitization is defined by Parviainen et al. (2017) as the conversion of analogue data into digital form. This process is seen as a prerequisite for being able to digitalize (Rachinger et al., 2018). Thus, the digitalization process is dependent on the existence of data in digital format in order to take place.

Digitalization is considered a vague and broad concept, due to its many definitions. However, digitalization is being defined as the “use of digital technology, and digitized information to create and harvest value in new ways” (Gobble, 2018). In an organizational context, digitalization is defined as “the development and implementation of ICT systems and concomitant organizational change” (Gebre-Mariam & Bygstad, 2019), while it in relation to business models is defined as the “use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities” (Gartner, 2016). The three mentioned definitions address digitalization respectively at a general, organizational, and business level. These definitions are all fruitful for our understanding of digitalization, as they are highly

relevant to the digital changes academics´ have gone through during the pandemic.

2.1.1 Digital transformation

Digital transformation is a term that is frequently used when talking about digitalization. Vial (2019) defines the term as "a process that aims to improve an entity by triggering significant changes to its properties through combinations of information, computing, communication, and connectivity technologies". Thus, the term digital transformation could be seen as the process where significant improvements related to an entity are made possible through the adoption of digital technologies. In such a process could the whole organization, as well as external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, and partners be affected. Hence, making a well-developed strategy and minor digital changes are seen as necessary assets in the implementation of a digital transformation (Almeida et al., 2020).

During the pandemic, academics have been forced to implement several such digital changes (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Tasks that were previously done physically at the university were forced to be done from home with the help of digital tools such as Zoom, Teams, and streaming services. These changes have introduced a number of new work processes and requirements, that make it possible for the same job to be done in different ways. In our thesis, we will look at what actions have been taken in the implementation of these digital changes, and how it has affected academics' motivation and well-being during the pandemic.

2.2 Organizational change

As the business world becomes progressively more complex throughout the progress of new technologies, approaches, and procedures, employees are expected to not only adapt but embrace change as a way of their working life (Rodda, 2010). However, with the pandemic and the following digital changes, embracing change has become more important than ever. Organizations have been forced to do business differently, and with most employees required to work from home, business processes have had to change momentarily for

organizations to survive (Al-Omoush et al., 2020). These new changes command employees to embrace new ways of working and impose drastic adjustments to how they perform their job tasks. Thereby, presenting a unique and unpredictable challenge for organizations (Sull et al., 2020). The section that follows will provide a theoretical foundation of organizational change. Additionally, the section will also postulate three change process variables that may promote positive employee reactions to change.

2.2.1 Theoretical perspectives and models of change

Organizational change is the process in which an organization changes its present arrangement, work routines, strategies, or culture that may significantly affect the organization (Herold et al., 2008). Several typologies of change have emerged in an attempt to classify change. Weick and Quinn (1999) discuss change as either *episodic* or *continuous*, where an assumption for both descriptions of change is that the ideal organization is one that constantly adapts to its environment. *Continuous change* is understood as ongoing, progressing, and cumulative, and happens every day as small adjustments (Weick & Quinn, 1999). On the other hand, *episodic change* is described as an organizational change that is occasional, discontinuous, and intentional. This change occurs in divergent periods where shifts are caused by external events such as technology transformation or internal events such as reorganization (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Further, episodic changes can either be planned or unplanned, depending upon the exact purpose of the change and what activates it (Malopinsky & Osman, 2006). Planned change occurs when the analysis of business operations reveals problems that require improvement (Li et al., 2021). This systematic and controlled change helps proactively improve organizations performance and effectiveness (Stolovitch & Keeps, 1992).

By contrast, unplanned change is regularly imposed by unexpected external forces rather than being proactively started by the organization itself (Li et al., 2021). Such changes happen due to a problematic situation in the organizational surroundings (i.e., Covid-19) that may interrupt the

organization's operations and intimidate its reputation. Therefore, such shifts in the environment require organizations to respond rapidly and strategically (Shaw, 2018). The main goal of such unplanned changes is to minimize the negative impacts of the situation, maximize potential benefits and turn the situation into an opportunity (Schermerhorn et al., 2003). With the implementation of changes such as working from home, digital meetings, and use of digital tools, universities have allowed their employees to adopt the new situation with COVID-19, and tried to turn it into an opportunity. However, lack of sufficient time, and preparation have formed some obstacles to these changes (Li et al., 2021). Such obstacles could possibly expose the academics to uncertainty, threats or even harm (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). Therefore, the way the academics have made sense of and reacted to the unexpected situation with the pandemic could be crucial to the success of unplanned change implementation (Shin et al., 2012).

2.2.1.1 Lewin´s 3-stage model of change

Process models of change inspect activities taken to initiate or facilitate organizational change (Rodda, 2010). Lewin (1947) conceptualized change in human systems as a phased process through the three stages: unfreezing, moving, and freezing. In short, the unfreezing stage involves redirecting individuals from their current state to a state where they are open for change. Throughout the unfreezing stage, a state of “change readiness” is created, and prior learning is supposed to be rejected and replaced (Lewin, 1947). According to Schein (1996) the stage is accomplished through several different mechanisms such as disconfirmation of expectations, induction of learning anxiety, and provision of psychological safety.

In the moving or transition stage, individuals are anticipated to change from their current state to the future state (Lewin, 1947). At this stage, certain behaviors might be required to enable employees to move to the new state. These behaviors can include communication, supportive leadership, and other activities that support new learning (Rodda, 2010). At last, the refreezing stage arises as individuals come to terms with their new state and the change is made enduring. New behaviors learned because of the change eventually become

natural, and a new identity is founded to support these behaviors (Lewin, 1947).

2.2.3 Employee perception of change

At the turn of the millennium, researchers started to shift their focus from organizational outcomes and processes to the perspective of changing attitudes of organizational members (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Some of the most studied change attitudes include acceptance of change (Gagné et al., 2006), change readiness (Rafferty et al., 2012), change openness (Augustsson et al., 2017), resistance to change (Pardo del Val & Fuentes, 2003), and commitment to change (Rogiest et al., 2015). All these change attitudes span both positive and negative sides of the spectrum in terms of potential employee responses to change. In addition, it is also showed that employee's perception of change, whether positive or negative, are affected by the organization´s attempt to influence their attitudes or behaviors during the change (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017). Further, Fedor and colleagues (2006) state that what the organization and its management does prior to and throughout the process have a great impact on reactions to organizational change. Based on this, we will in the next section present three factors that may have affected the academics perception of the pandemic and the following digital changes.

2.2.3.1 Participation in the change process

Employee participation is regarded as important for increasing acceptance and reducing change uncertainty or resistance (Hussain et al., 2018). Wanberg and Banas (2000) suggest that employees that get to participate in the change process express greater beliefs of the benefits of the change. One explanation for this effect of participation is that it might employ a motivational effect, as it builds trust in the change process and creates trust between the employees and the management (Edwards et al., 2020). Further, the chance to participate in a change process might produce a sense of control for employees, and thereby less uncertainty about the ongoing change (Mckay et al., 2013). According to Karp (2014) it is therefore vital for leaders to create arenas where employees can participate and share their opinions, as this will create motivated employees that want to participate in the changes process. In essence,

participation should therefore facilitate a sense of ownership of the change process, where employees feel that they are integrated, clearly understand its strategic purpose and benefits, and experience efficacy regarding the new challenges posed by the change (Mckay et al., 2013).

2.2.3.2 Change communication

The communication regarding the change is considered to be critical for the support of, or the resistance to the given change (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017). In order for someone to adapt to others, knowing what others want them to do is essential. However, this information is only received if the communication in the organization works satisfactorily (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2014). Communication of high quality is seen to reduce employee resistance to change, while poor and inappropriate change communication are often seen to be the prime cause for employee resistance and conflicts regarding change (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017). This emphasizes the importance of communication in change processes and that it can create synergy effects.

High-quality communication requires that the choice of communication channel fits the message to be conveyed (Jacobsen & Thorsvik, 2014). Findings from Dennis et al. (2008), suggest that the more uncertainty there is associated with the message, the richer the communication channel used should be. The pandemic has caused a situation with a lot of uncertainty and changes both at work and on a personal level. Thus, the quality of communication and choice of communication channel could be decisive in whether the employees have managed to successfully implement the changes and decreased the degree of uncertainty. Hence, whether the academics have experienced that they have received sufficient information in a suitable manner could play a part in how they have coped with the changes.

2.2.3.3 Supervisory support of change

Supervisors are thought to have the greatest impact on employee attitudes and behaviors (Antoni, 2004). Employees perceive them as the connection between themselves and the organization. When employees feel supported by their supervisors, they are likely to be more willing to embrace situations that are important to the organization (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017). Consequently,

how supervisors behave is likely to influence the reactions of the employees toward a change (Eisenberger et al., 2002). Rafferty and Griffin (2006) propose that support from supervisors can be thought of as a coping resource since supportive management most likely provides information and guidance to cope with organizational change. In their study, employees who replied that their supervisors were supportive reported less uncertainty associated with organizational change. Based on this, the support the academics received during the pandemic may play a crucial role in how they managed to cope with the uncertain situation and the following digital changes.

2.3 Motivation and performance

Most employees need motivation to feel good about their jobs and perform optimally. Motivation can be defined as “an internal state that initiates and maintains goal-directed behavior” (Mayer, 2011, p.302). Exactly what influences this internal state will vary from individual to individual. Hence, there are several factors that contribute to influencing employees´ motivation in an organization (Linder, 1998).

According to the literature, one way to find and understand such factors is through the use of the self-determination theory (SDT) (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2020). The SDT is a framework for understanding factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation, and autonomous extrinsic motivation. This framework suggests that the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental for people´s motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The first basic need, autonomy, concerns a sense of initiative and ownership in one's action. This sense of initiative and ownership is mainly influenced by whether the employees are experiencing their behavior as self-determined, and feel they are given the space and opportunity to make their own decisions (Ryan et al., 2019). The second need, competence, concerns the feeling that one can succeed and grow. This feeling is mainly influenced by whether the employee is facing optimal challenges, getting positive feedback, and opportunities to grow at the workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The final need, relatedness, concerns a sense of belonging and connection. This need is impacted by whether the employee

is feeling cared for and fit with others at the workplace (Ryan et al., 2019). During the pandemic all of these fundamental psychological needs have been threatened (McGaughey et al., 2021). Hence, we want to map the motivational factors that exist among academics, and how the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected these.

2.3.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

In the literature, a distinction is made between two different types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to an internal desire to do something, while extrinsic motivation comes from outside a person (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017).

2.3.1.1 Intrinsic motivation

Davis et al. (1992, p. 1113) define intrinsic motivation as "the performance of an activity for no apparent reinforcement other than the process of performing the activity per se". If someone has an intrinsic motivation to complete a work task, the person does it "for their own sake" and enjoyment, and not only due to some external pressure or to get a reward (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The task will be a reward in itself, as the person will experience enjoyment and satisfaction because of what they have done (Lindenberg, 2001). Such tasks allow a person to learn, develop and expand their own capacity. Further, it should also be emphasized that a person cannot necessarily achieve intrinsic motivation for all work tasks he or she perform. In fact, there are also people who do not have intrinsic motivation for any work tasks they perform (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Self-determination theory postulates that individuals will be more intrinsically motivated as they perceive more relatedness, autonomy, and competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Present research on academics' motivation, indicates that the pandemic and the following changes have increased their autonomy and competence, while decreased their relatedness (Rietveld et al., 2021). It will therefore be interesting to explore whether the academics were intrinsically motivated in participating in the digitalization process, and whether universities

have facilitated any actions to strengthen their intrinsic motivation during the pandemic.

2.3.1.2 Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is a reward in the traditional sense. This could for instance be money, bonuses and perks, or other rewards such as promotion (Ganta, 2014). Thus, the motivation to do a work task comes from outside of the person. There are many types of extrinsic motivation, and according to the SDT, extrinsic motivation can be categorized into the four major subtypes: external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The first subtype, external regulation, concerns behaviors driven by externally imposed rewards and punishments (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Meaning, behaviors that are driven by for instance a higher salary or longer vacation belong to this subtype. The second subtype, introjected regulation, concerns motivation that has been partly internalized. This type of extrinsic motivation is often regulated by a person´s contingent self-esteem and ego involvement (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Hence, behaviors driven by this type of extrinsic motivation are often implemented to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego enhancements such as pride (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Both external regulation and introjected regulation exemplify controlled forms of motivation. However, extrinsic motivation can also be autonomous, and the two final subtypes of identified and integrated regulation can be categorized as such (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In identified regulation, the person consciously identifies with, or personally validates the value of a task, and therefore experiences a relatively high degree of willingness to act (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Such behavior could for instance be a lecturer who strongly values their student's learning outcome and understands the importance of doing their share of the unpleasant tasks for the students. The final subtype, integrated regulation, is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. In this type of extrinsic motivation, does the person not only identify with the value of the task, but he or she does also find it to be congruent with other core interests and values (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Based on these two subtypes of extrinsic motivation, we can see some similarities between autonomous extrinsic

motivation and intrinsic motivation. However, where intrinsic motivation is based on interest and enjoyment, autonomous extrinsic motivation is based on a sense of value (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

In the literature, it is argued that extrinsic motivation can have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation. External rewards can direct the individual´s focus towards the reward itself rather than the enjoyment of performing the task, and thus actually impair performance (Benabou & Tirole, 2003). This is supported by the fact that individuals who do act based on expectations of receiving a reward, often perform worse than those who expect no rewards at all (Kohn, 1993). Further, when it comes to changing attitudes and behaviors, incentives and rewards often have a low impact. They are ineffective in producing lasting change, and once the rewards run out, people revert to their old behaviors (Kohn, 1993). In our case, the pandemic and the following digital changes have forced employees to change (Almeida et al., 2020). Therefore, it is interesting to investigate whether the academics have implemented the digital changes in their "new normal" or returned to old habits.

2.3.2 Job demands-resources model (JD-R model)

The job demands-resources model (JD-R model) provides a framework for studying the process by which work environment, as well as personal resources, determine well-being and motivation (Van den Heuvel et al., 2010). It describes two dual processes, a motivation process and a health impairment process, and it suggests that high job demands lead to strain and health impairment (the health impairment process), while higher job and personal resources contribute to increased engagement and higher productivity (the motivational process) (Schaufeli & Toon, 2014). Demerouti et al. (2001, p.501) refer to job demands as "those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that demand sustained physical and/or mental effort". This could for instance be time pressure, work overload, or interpersonal conflicts. Job resources refer to "those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (1) are functional in achieving work-related goals, (2) reduce job demands and

the associated physical and psychological costs, and (3) stimulate personal growth and development" (Demerouti et al., 2001, p. 501). Such aspects could be feedback, support from leaders and other employees, or job control. Further, the JD-R model does also include personal resources as a contributor to the motivation process. Hobfoll et al. (2003) describe personal resources as aspects of the self that are generally linked to resiliency. Such aspects are seen as affecting the relationship between job resources and work engagement (Van den Heuvel et al., 2010).

The health impairment process is concerned with the maintenance of performance stability under demanding conditions, which requires the mobilization and management of mental effort. When confronted with higher job demands, employees either accept a reduction in their performance with no increase in costs, or they implement performance protection strategies that are related to extra costs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Such costs could for instance be exhaustion or irritability. When this takes place over a longer period, this will impact employees' energy level, and possibly lead to impairment of their health and burnout (Hockey, 1997).

The second process, the motivational process, is driven by the accessibility of job and personal resources. As follows from the earlier definition, job and personal resources may play an intrinsic motivational role since they endorse employees´ growth, learning, and development, or they may play an extrinsic motivational role since they are contributory in accomplishing work goals (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Hence, a work environment that offers resources, is likely to create employees who are willing to make an extra effort in relation to their work tasks (Xanthopoulou, 2009). Further, this also increases the likelihood of good results for the organization, since the job resources will create encouragement and thus increase the possibility of goal achievement at the organization (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

As a result of the pandemic, academics experienced a sudden shift in their work environment. Work tasks that earlier were unthinkable to be done other places than physically at the university, were suddenly made digitally overnight, causing huge change in job demands (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al.,

2021). Therefore, it will be interesting to look at how this shift in the work environment has been dealt with by the academics, and whether they have had the resources to implement them without any personal costs or reduction in performance.

3. Method

This chapter aims to explain the methodological considerations and decisions that have been made to form our research method for this thesis. This chapter will include the philosophical considerations, research design and method of the thesis. Further, the chapter will describe our approach for data collection, how we analyzed this data, and an evaluation of the quality of our data. The chapter finishes with some ethical consideration regarding the thesis.

3.1 Philosophical considerations

The goal of creating and building knowledge about how the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected academics motivation and well-being cannot be successful without the fundamentals of the basic stance of knowledge building, which are ontological and epistemological philosophies (Bell et al., 2019). Ontology is concerned with the questions of "what is there?" while epistemology is concerned with the two questions "what do you know?" and "how do you know it?" (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.1.1 Ontological considerations

In order to create knowledge about how the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected academics' motivation and well-being, we want to explore and investigate academics' personal experiences of the situation. Hence, our ontological position for this thesis is regarded as constructivism (Bell et al., 2019). Constructivism challenges the suggestion that categories such as organization and culture are objective phenomena which confront social actors as external realities. Rather, it regards them as socially constructed entities that are made real by the actions and understandings of humans (Bell et al., 2019). As researchers, we will therefore enter the field with existing knowledge of the research context, while remaining open to new knowledge throughout the study and letting it develop with the help of the academics (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

3.1.2 Epistemological considerations

Epistemology follows logically from ontology, and therefore we have to gain knowledge in a certain way, for example by interviewing them, to understand how the academics shape and understand the situation (Bell et al., 2019). Since we have a constructivist position our epistemology is considered interpretivist. This position considers a view that the subject matter of the social sciences, such as people and organizations are fundamentally different from natural sciences (Bell et al., 2019). The aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how eight academics have experienced the changes from the pandemic on their motivation and well-being. By exploring and investigating the perspective of these academics, we aspire to gain insight into, as well as understand how this uncertain and urgent situation has been experienced by each of them.

3.2 Research design and method

For the current study, we applied a case study research design. A case study is an approach to research that facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources (Bell et al., 2019). According to Yin (2003), researchers should consider using a case study design when the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions. Placing this into the focus of this thesis, our research will emphasize and explore *how* the Covid-19 pandemic and the following digital changes have affected the motivation and well-being of eight academics from higher education in Norway. By applying this approach, we ensure that the effects of the pandemic and the following digital changes is not explored through one lens, but rather through a variety of lenses that allow for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The research design was, thereby, a conscious decision taken to answer our research question most accurately.

However, a challenge with a case study is to gather data that supports the theoretical framework that underlies the research (Bell et al., 2019). A case study does not generate answers that can be generalized to other contexts, however, a case study needs to generate theory based on the findings in the research (Yin, 2003). Hence, case studies are categorized as inductive, as they

move from a specific case to build theory based on the findings (Bell et al., 2019). However, this thesis will still be somewhat deductive as our case will be analyzed based on pre-existing theory.

Based on our research question, we have chosen a qualitative approach as this enables us to deep dive into the topic and gain an extensive understanding of individuals' personal experiences, opinions, and attitudes (Gripsrud et al., 2018). To gain this understanding we have decided to use semi-structured in-depth interviews as our methodological tool for data collection. This one-to-one interview gives us the opportunity to extract and go in-depth on various variables that have affected each academic´s personal encounter with the pandemic and the following digital changes (Bell et al., 2019). The questions in the interview guide were derived from our theoretical framework, and these have been operationalized in order to answer our given research question.

3.3 The research process

In this section, we will highlight the practical choices we have made in the implementation of the research process.

3.3.1 Recruitment and selection

By using in-depth interviews, our ambition is to go in-depth to understand and examine how the pandemic and its following digital changes have impacted academics motivation and well-being. Therefore, it will be appropriate to sample participants in a strategic way, using purposive sampling (Bell et al., 2019). To compile relevant data for our research question, we decided to conduct semi-structured in-depth interviews of a limited sample of academics from different universities in Norway. Eventually, we ended up with a sample of eight. To ensure their anonymity, we decided to exclude their gender, age, and university as these are variables that can be traced back to them and hurt their anonymity. All eight were strategically recruited based on their university and the criteria that they had been lecturing both before and during the pandemic, as these are variables we believe contribute with relevant data to our research question. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2.2.3, the support, communication, and participation during the change process are all factors

impacting an employee´s perception of the change. Hence, we believe having a variation in universities are important and relevant, as universities most likely have handled these three factors differently.

Saunders et al. (2009) states that the size of a sample must be seen in relation with the purpose of the study, and that it depends on what you want to research, as well as available resources. Our interest is primarily in mapping the variation among academics' views, experiences, and attitudes towards the pandemic and the following digital changes. However, as we are conducting a case study, we will not be able to generate any results that are generalizable outside our study (Yin, 2003).

3.3.2 Collection of data

The primary data for this thesis are generated using semi-structured in-depth interviews. All the interviews were conducted through the meeting function of the program Zoom, as this was the most time-efficient alternative, and gave us the opportunity to have participants from across Norway without any additional costs. For each interview we both participated. However, one of us always acquired the role of leading the interview and conversation, while the other should ensure that all questions from the interview guide were asked, as well as contributing with follow-up questions. Due to our minimal experience in conducting such interviews, we considered it a reassurance that we both participated.

As mentioned above, we did use the program Zoom to conduct our interviews. Although, all our participants were familiar and had used this digital tool during the pandemic, we do find it important to address how this digital adaptation possibly has led to some limitations. Our thoughts are that all participants were comfortable with the situation; however, this is something we cannot say with certainty. The fact that they all were familiar with the tool, is something we assume has positively influenced the research and their presence during the interviews. Hence, our overall view is that we do not believe the interviews were particularly negatively affected by the lack of physical presence. However, it is important to address that we did not have the

opportunity to observe the participants full body language and reactions to questions and answers.

In advance of our interviews, we did prepare an interview guide with questions that we wanted to get answered. This was a guide that we used to form a foundation for our semi-structured interviews. However, our semi-structured approach meant that the order of the questions could vary from interview to interview, as well as gave us the opportunity to ask follow-up questions if necessary. This made it possible to have stability in the interviews, as well as flexibility (Bell et al., 2019). It is also important to mention that our interviews took place in Norwegian, as we believed this would minimize potential misinterpretations and make it easier for the participants to express themselves. The length of the interviews varied from 40-65 minutes.

The collection of data material could also have been conducted in a focus group. This would have reduced the time spent on gathering the data, and the interaction in the focus group could have led to good discussions between the participants. However, we decided to use in-depth interviews, as focus groups have their limitations in organizing, group effects, such as someone hogging the stage and peer pressure, and are harder to control (Bell et al., 2019). We also assumed that our focus on motivation and well-being could have affected participants willingness to speak in a focus group. As these themes are personal and could be hard to openly discuss in a bigger group with strangers. Further, we also believe that the dynamics of the conversation itself would have been negatively affected if we were to conduct a group interview through Zoom.

3.3.3 Data analysis

In the data analysis, we applied the approach Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). This is a methodical approach for exploring, in-depth, how individuals experience and ascribe meaning to a specific phenomenon (Smith and Osborn, 2008). There is no decisive way to perform an IPA, but Smith and Osborn (2009) have made an analysis guide with distinctive steps, which this thesis is inspired by. Step 1: Get to know the data: To get familiarized with the data material we both read the transcripts from all the interviews several times.

Step 2: Preliminary notes: While the transcript was read, keywords that were relevant for further analysis were written down. Step 3: Development of codes: After developing an overview of the content of the data material, the data that was relevant to answering the research question was discussed and structured into codes.

Steps 4 and 5: Search for connections across codes and development of sub-themes: In these steps, we examined connections between the different codes to see if there were any codes that overlapped. If codes overlapped, we did put these together into one sub-theme. Furthermore, the topics were compared with what the participants said during the interview to ensure that the topics matched the statements of the academics. This ensured that our interpretation was consistent with what the academics shared in their interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Step 6: Identification of main themes across the interviews: The themes that emerged in step 5 were put together in such a way that one could see the relationship between them. This led to more themes being brought together under fewer overarching themes (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Table 1 illustrates one example from this process:

Super-ordinate themes	Transcripts highlighting the sense of each theme	Translation
Motivational factors and performance	**Subtheme: What motivates an academic?** P8: "Det som motiverer meg mest er det å være en del av et faglig felleskap. Å få rom til å utforske ting som jeg syntes er interessant og møte studenter som jeg kan diskutere disse samme faglige tingene med."	P8: "What motivates me the most is to be part of a professional community. Having freedom to explore things I find interesting and meet students whom I can discuss these academic things with"
	Subtheme: SDT (autonomy) P2: "Det er også motiverende å kunne delta digitalt på møter hvis det passer bedre for meg. At man styrer hverdagen sin selv."	P2: "It is also motivating to be able to participate digitally in meetings if it suits me better. That you manage your workday yourself."
	Subtheme: JD-R P5: "Det å sitte foran en pc når man egentlig har kunne gått rundt og samhandle med studentene, det blir en helt annen inspirasjon. Også plutselig kommer man til helt svarte skjermer. Ja, det er depressing."	P5: "Sitting in front of a PC when you usually have been able to walk around and engage with the students, it becomes a completely different inspiration. In addition, suddenly all you see is completely black screens. Yes, it is depressing"
Perception of change	P8:"For meg var det ikke en så stor overgang heller, [...] Hjemmekontor er noe jeg hadde ofte før pandemien"	P8: "For me it was not such a big transition either […] I often worked from home before the pandemic"
	Subtheme: Communication "Jeg har fått lange tekster fra ledelsen; "sånn skal du gjøre, og sånn skal du gjøre, og sånn skal du gjøre". Jeg har ikke tid til å sette meg inn i det, jeg blir helt svimmel bare av å se på det[...]"	P8: "I received long texts from the management; "that's how you should do, and that's how you should do, and that's how you should do". I do not have time to get hold of it, I get completely dizzy just by looking at it [...]."
Work-life balance	P5: "[...] jo lenger det ble med hjemmekontor, jo vanskeligere var det å balansere Jeg liker det bedre nå med å ha et annet fysisk sted, der du går når klokken er fem [...]. Da er det ikke sånn dårlig følelse når jeg bare ignorerer notifications. For jeg vet i morgen klokken halv ni så er jeg tilbake på kontoret, og da kan jeg svare."	P5: "[…] The longer we needed to work from home, the more difficult it was to balance. I like it better now as I have another physical place, where you leave when the clock is 5 […]. Then it's not such a bad feeling when I just ignore notifications. Because I know at half past eight in the morning I will be back in the office, and then I can answer"
The "New normal" of academics	P3: "Før eller siden må vi nok gjøre noen fag digitale. Så jeg tror ikke fremtiden er svart/hvitt, jeg tror ikke den er digital eller campus. Jeg tror den er en blanding av digital, hybrid og campus"	P3: "Eventually we must probably do some subjects digitally. So I do not think the future is black and white, I do not think it is digital or campus. I think it is a mixture of digital, hybrid and campus"

Table 1: Example data analysis

After completing all these six steps, we found and structured the following main and sub-themes:

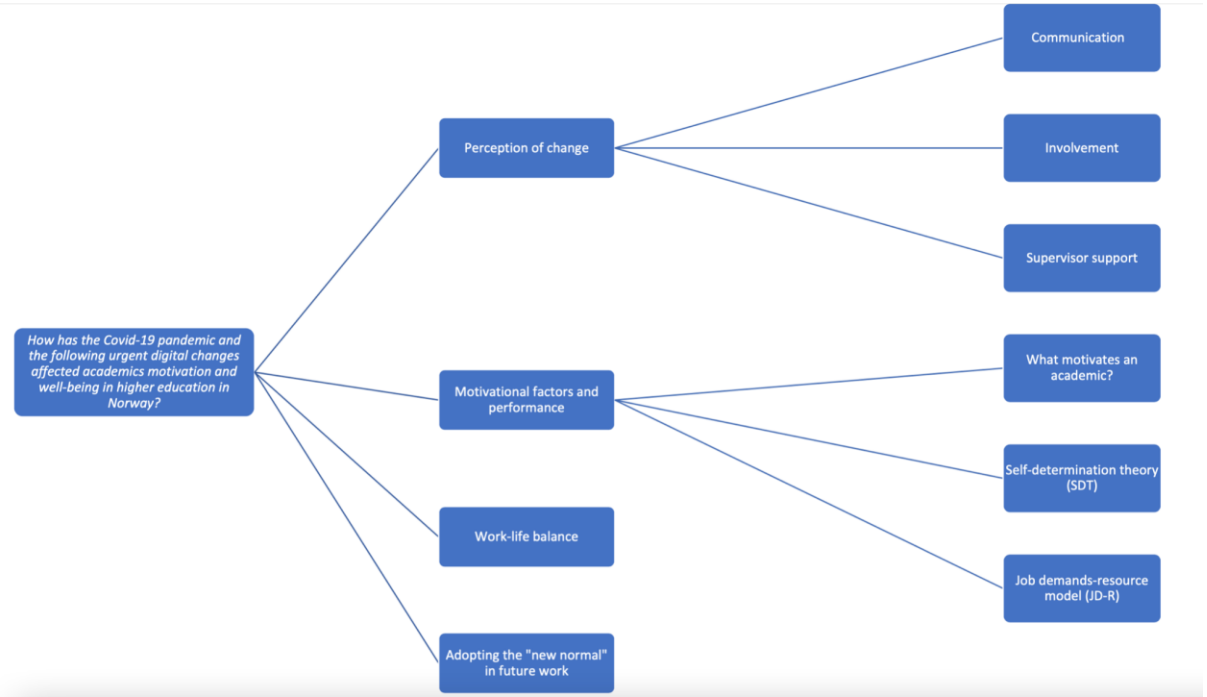

Figure 1: Main and sub-themes

This model forms the basis for our findings in chapter 4: Analysis and findings.

3.4 Quality of the data material

Since it is important to evaluate and establish the quality of our thesis, we will in this part emphasize how we have interpreted the criteria of validity and reliability in our research (Bell et al., 2019).

3.4.1 Validity

Validity is concerned with the integrity of conclusions that are generated from a piece of research (Bell et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be seen as the extent a methodological tool measures what it is purports to measure (Kimberlin & Winterstein, 2008). When talking about validity, the term is mainly distinguished in internal and external validity (Ferreira et al., 2020).

3.4.1.1 Internal validity

Internal validity relates mainly to the issue of causality, and the relationship between cause and effect (Bell et al., 2019). Since we are using semi-structured interviews as our method for data collection, there are few “layers” between us

as researchers and the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 1995). To ensure intern validity, we did use the strategy of data triangulation. This strategy refers to the use of multiple data sources to help understand a phenomenon (Johnson, 1997), which in our research are the use of multiple semi-structured interviews. Further, we did send out a consent form to our participants prior to the interviews. This form contained information about the purpose of the study, what it meant to participate as a respondent, privacy considerations, as well as clarifications of their anonymity and their rights (see appendix 1). We also prepared an interview guide in accordance with our research question (see appendix 2), so that we could shed light on all the topics we wanted to address. Additionally, the respondents´ anonymity can lead to more honest answers, as they cannot be traced back to the individual respondent (Ong & Weiss, 2000). However, something that can reduce the internal validity of our research is if respondents are unable to answer questions or give us answers that they think will make us satisfied (Bell et al., 2019).

3.4.1.2 External validity

External validity is concerned with the question of whether the results from a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context (Bell et at., 2019). It is argued that external validity represents a problem for case studies (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Since we only have interviewed a limited sample of eight academics who all have their own specific experience of the pandemic and the following digital changes, our results will not be transferable to others. Hence, our results cannot be generalized beyond our study.

3.4.2 Reliability

Reliability is concerned with the question of whether the results of a study are repeatable. That is, if the study is replicated, would the findings be the same? (Merriam, 1995). However, this is a difficult criterion to meet in our research because it is impossible to “freeze” a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Therefore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that qualitative researchers should rather strive for dependability. As the real question in qualitative research is not

whether the results of one study are the same as the results of a second or a third study, but whether the results of a study are consistent with the data collected. To create dependability in our research we did try to ensure that we interpreted the statements from our respondents correctly by asking them follow-up questions if we were uncertain or something was unclear. We have also tried to describe all the phases of our research process in a detailed manner so other researchers can use this thesis as an operating manual to replicate our research. Furthermore, the fact that we must translate our respondents' statements from Norwegian to English could weaken some of the research´s dependability as it could lead to misinterpretation. However, to minimize this potential source of error, we have decided to use an interpreter from an English-speaking country to verify our translations, as well as back translate our translations. We also did a pilot test of our interview guide with someone we knew from the education sector, to ensure that our questions covered our research question. Finally, we also tried to build dependability by having both of us participate in all the interviews, transcription, coding, and analysis.

3.5 Ethical considerations of research

It is important for the credibility of the research that we as researchers follow the ethical principles of research, that are regulated by scientific, ethical, and legal norms. To ensure this, participants received information about the purpose of the research, their rights under the process, how the results will be used, the data that will be collected, and any potential consequences of participating in the project (Regjeringen, 2021; De Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komiteene, 2019; De Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komiteene, 2021). As we gained access to personal data in our research, the thesis became notifiable under "Personopplysningsloven" and had to be reported to "Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata" (NSD) (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata, n.d.). NSD did assess that the processing of personal data in the project were in accordance with the privacy regulations, and we have continuously followed their guidelines during the research process (ID number: 145578). As mentioned in chapter 3.4.1.1 all participants were sent a consent form with information about the thesis and their rights as participants prior to the interviews. Initially in the interviews, we also reminded the participants that their anonymity would be

maintained and that they had the opportunity to withdraw from the research both before, during, and after the interview if desired. Simultaneously, we emphasized securing confidentiality by informing that the answers exclusively will be used in our thesis, and that all audio recordings and transcripts would be deleted once the project ended.

4. Analysis and findings

In this chapter, our empirical findings from the data collection will be presented and analyzed. The chapter will be structured similar to figure 1 in the methodology section, and the findings will be presented in the following order:

1. Perception of change
2. Motivational factors and performance
3. Work-life balance
4. Adopting the “new normal” in the future work

These findings will form the basis for a later discussion regarding how the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected the academics motivation and well-being.

Furthermore, we will refer to the participants as Participant 1 (P1) – Participant 8 (P8), to protect and maintain their anonymity.

4.1 Perception of the change

The academics perception of the change process could be influential to whether they have been able to cope with the pandemic and the following digital changes. Thus, we find it essential to investigate how the academics reacted to the changes, and whether they have experienced satisfaction with the communication, involvement, and support during the process. As whether they have been able to cope with the process or not, could be decisive for their motivation and well-being.

From the interviews, it was discovered that the academics experienced the pandemic and following digital changes differently. When asked about their immediate reaction to the unplanned change in their work situation, the responses varied from being positive, negative, and neutral about the situation. However, most of the reactions could be seen as neutral. The variety in experiences is exemplified by the following statements: "I thought it would give me a more flexible everyday life, I thought first and foremost positively about it.” (P2, 2022), “I was not very happy about it. […] Everything had to be digital, first of all it is definitely not ideal, and second it was very sudden. So, I was not pleased.” (P4, 2022), and

> For me, it did not mean much, because I did a lot of flipped classrooms already. So personally, it did not mean much. This meant that the few lectures I had, I had to do digitally instead of in the auditorium. (P3, 2022).

Several participants that expressed a positive or neutral reaction stated that they had previous experience with working digitally and not always being at the office, and that this helped them cope with the change: “[…] I have worked quite a bit digitally previously. That was not seen as a big problem.” (P5, 2022). This is also supported by P8: “For me it was not such a big transition either […] working from home is something I often did before the pandemic” (P8, 2022). Additionally, some participants express that a form of shock made them accept the change without any thoughts or complications. This is expressed by the following quote by P6: “It was such a big shock [...]. I accepted it right away, so it was a shock. It was very strange” (P6, 2022).

One of the participants, stated that uncertainty with the situation and not being able to plan was a notable cause for their perception of the change: “Again, it’s all these uncertainties that made it difficult, because if we had known; would it be for half a year or two years? It would be okay, but we couldn’t really plan things. That was annoying.” (P4, 2022). It is important to emphasize that these uncertainties are associated with the unordinary situation, and for instance not bad leadership.

4.1.1 Communication

The participants expressed numerous experiences regarding change management from their leaders, both negative and positive. Firstly, communication from leaders about the organizational changes was seen as crucial during this uncertain period to cope with their new work situation. From the data, we find a wide range of what, when, and how information has been communicated to the academics. Three of the eight participants told us that the information given by their leaders was not sufficient. One of these participants told us that little to no information was given and that the participant felt left on their own by the leaders, which is illustrated in the following quote: "We had very little plenary information, we were sort of left

to ourselves.” (P6, 2022). Another participant that was not fully satisfied with the communication told us:

> […] The information has probably been good, but there has probably been some unease as well. Things have somehow not been clear and distinct, everything from teaching to exams, but it has been difficult for everybody really. It's new for everyone. (P5, 2022).

As we can see from this statement it seems that even though the communication was not considered good enough, the participant is somewhat accepting this since the whole situation has been very unclear for everyone in the organization.

The interviews displayed various procedures that have been used to provide information about the digital changes to the academics. The main groupings for information distribution have been informative videos, descriptive e-mails, and joint meetings online. Most of the participants are not showing any dissatisfaction with the chosen methods of communication, and it is expressed that these methods have to a large extent worked in a sufficient and satisfactory manner. However, P6 voiced dissatisfaction with the communication channels used by her leaders: “So, there were videos and some instructions posted on our website. […] However, it did not really work and there were also a couple of joint gatherings, but no, it has not worked.” (P6, 2022). P8 also supports the claim that text information such as instructions is not a suitable way of communicating:

> I received long texts from the management; "that's how you should do, and that's how you should do, and that's how you should do". I do not have time to get hold of it, I get completely dizzy just by looking at it [...]. (P8, 2022).

From this, we can see that there has not been one particular method of communication that have been preferred by all the participants. However, it is important to address that we are not known with the quality of the information given by their leaders.

4.1.2 Involvement

When asked about their individual opportunity to participate in the change process, some of the participants could not bring forward a concrete example

where they were involved or felt left out of the process. However, these participants did not air any displeasure or frustration with this lack of involvement. On the other hand, P5 spoke about the dissatisfaction with not being able to participate, and why involvement would be convenient:

> I think that if I had been a leader, I would have spent time finding these meeting places for colleagues so that one can discuss this [digital teaching and use of digital tools]. Our experiences, what works and what does not work [...]. So, establishing these arenas and creating this framework for us lecturers, yes, it could have made it better, and the management could have been better at it. (P5, 2022).

P8 also expressed that the number of joint meetings was limited and that she did not have the opportunity to discuss the technical solutions concerning digital teaching with others: “No, there have been no discussions at all about the technical solutions.” (P8, 2022). Additionally, P6 did neither get to directly participate in the process, further, the participant felt in fact left alone by the management: “You are on your own attitude. When you are met with it, it is like, I can manage myself, but do I want to contribute something then, or should I just stay laidback and just do my job? ". (P6, 2022). From this, it is told that the lack of distinctive leadership and support have made the participant questioning her own willingness to engage and contribute.

P2 spoke specifically about the positives of getting involved by her leaders and getting the chance to participate in the change process. The participant voiced that her willingness to change and digital skills were recognized by the leader, something that made her want to contribute and participate in the process: “Getting praise is always good. I felt that it gave me a drive to contribute and to come up with suggestions for what has worked well for me. […]” (P2, 2022). P2 moreover stated that her leader facilitated joint meetings with colleagues where they could share their experience with digital teaching and use of digital tools to enhance each other's practices. During these meetings, she discovered that her competence could be positive for the rest of the organization.

Further, P2 spoke about how this involvement and input sharing encouraged her voluntary help colleagues who struggled with the use of digital tools, and that she encouraged them to embrace them. In addition to assisting colleagues,

she stated that she actively spoke positive about the benefits of digital tools to them, and she was also determined to do this in the future. P1 has the same perception of the experience sharing in joint meetings and the positives of this type of involvement:

> We had several seminars, where we sat together from different departments, and talked a bit about what we had tried to do. Did it work, did it not work? We also found a collection of different things that worked well, […] (P1, 2022).

These statements express, that involving academics in joint meetings with colleagues about the technical aspects of digital teaching and tools have been perceived as useful. In alignment with this, academics that did not have the opportunity to have such meetings are voicing that this could have helped them handle the digital changes better.

4.1.3 Supervisor support

As discovered in the findings about communication and involvement, there are also differences in how the academics perceived the support from their supervisor. Moreover, in what way the academics evaluate the support from their supervisor will somewhat be linked with communication and involvement. This is because rich and high-quality communication and being open to suggestions could be considered supportive actions (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017).

The academics talk about several ways they have been supported or not. Most of them feel they have been supported in a way that aided them to take on the digital changes. This is shown in the statement by P1: "They [leaders] also told all the staff that if you need anything for tuition, licenses, software or any equipment like headphones and stuff like that, the department will provide money for it and pay for it." (P1, 2022). P1 adds that the leadership at his department has been overall very supportive.

P2 felt strongly supported by the supervisor, and thereby became more eager to embrace the digital changes in the organization. P2 is the only one expressing such convincing behavior, and it is told in the interview that this engagement is connected to the support from her leaders. On the other hand, P6 is expressing

how the lack of supervisory support is distancing her from the situation: “So it was very bad that we did not have it [support from leaders]. And that the leaders did not take the time to talk to us or take such a one-to-one conversation” (P6, 2022). The participant is adding that there was a notable lack of follow-up and training from the leaders. P6 further expressed that all this made her feel left alone and further reduced the willingness to embrace the change process.

Half of the academics are elaborating on how their respective IT departments have guided and supported them greatly in this situation. This is displayed in the quote by P7: “The information has been good, and especially from those who operate and develop the [digital] tools or help us facilitate digital teaching. It has been very good. These short information videos have been great [...].” (P7, 2022). Hence, it is voiced that the respective IT departments have been a strong coping resource that has provided guidance and information to the academics related to the digital changes.

4.2 Motivational factors and performance

How the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected motivational factors and performance, could be decisive to whether the academics have experienced an effect on their motivation and well-being. Hence, it is of interest to look at how they feel the changes have affected their efficiency and performance, and whether motivational factors have changed during the pandemic. To get a perception of this, questions were asked about how they have experienced the effect of the changes on their efficiency and performance, their main motivation at the workplace, and how this has been affected by the situation. In the following part of the analysis, we will analyze these answers on the basis of different theories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the SDT, as well as the JD-R model.

4.2.1 What motivates an academic?

To understand what inspires academics in their everyday work, the participants were asked about their main motivation at their work and workplace. The answers are generally similar, as all participants either highlight their

relationship with students or colleagues as their main motivation. P8 states that: "What motivates me the most is to be part of a professional community. Having freedom to explore things I find interesting and meet students whom I can discuss these academic things with" (P8, 2022). A similar focus on social relations was also presented by P1, P2, and P6, who are respectively motivated by: "sitting and chatting with colleagues and other people here on the department and the floor" (P1, 2022), "[…] getting positive feedback from students when I teach […] (P2, 2022)", and "[…] teaching and being with the students, and guide them (P6, 2022)".

Although the participants' answer about their main motivation had a lot of similarities, the answers given when asked about how this motivational factor has been affected by the pandemic were more varied. Several of the participants express that the use of remote work and digital tools such as Zoom made it hard to maintain and create the relationships with students and colleagues. P2 and P7 exemplifies this as follows: "I felt that I had very little contact with the others […]", and "[…] it is clear that I have been distanced from the students" (P2, 2022; P7, 2022). They voice that the pandemic and the following digital changes have caused a loss of social relations. Informal conversations, physical meetings, and personal relations with students are highlighted as almost absent, and it is expressed that these losses have had a negative effect on the overall motivation: "The motivation has been more difficult in that period with home office. It is these informal contacts that are very important to me, and it was difficult to make them happen" (P1, 2022).

However, there are also participants who experienced that the pandemic and the following digital changes had a positive effect on their relationship with some students: "I actually got a more personal relationship to some of the students, the introduction of zoom made it possible to offer a few hours of individual follow-up if someone was struggling with something […]" (P2, 2022). P6 also express the same experience: "I feel that I have become very close to the students, this zoom and such I feel have given me a close bond to those I supervise" (P6, 2022). Further, P6 also states that although the social relations at the workplace have been deficient, the relation with the closest

colleagues have become more solid: "[…] the social relations are deficient. I have only related to those I cooperate with, and the relation with them has been strengthen" (P6, 2022). So even though it is expressed that the pandemic has had a negative effect on social relations, it is also expressed that it has had a positive effect on certain relationships.

Some of the participants also express that they have not felt any negative impact on their motivation even though they have experienced a loss in their social relations: "So it [the motivation] may not have changed, but that feeling of how great it is to be on a campus where employees and students mingle have been amplified" (P7, 2022). P7 expresses here that the loss of social relations during the pandemic has actually had a reinforcing effect on social relations as a motivational factor. Through the absence of the relations, it seems that it has become clearer how important and motivating this factor really is.

4.2.1.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

That the relationship with their students and colleagues is highlighted as the main motivational factor, suggests that the academics motivation is mainly intrinsic. As mentioned earlier, intrinsic motivation is about the individual being motivated by the work task itself rather than external incentives (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2017). Due to the pandemic, the academics have been forced to learn and use digital tools to conduct teaching and work tasks. However, several participants express a positive attitude towards the digital changes: "[…] I do think digitalization requires a lot of work, yes. But if you, do it once, you automate the processes and you then save time in the long-run […]" (P5, 2022). P6 even expresses that the process of learning the digital tools has given a feeling of mastery: "[…] it has given me such a feeling of mastery, so I know that I am not a complete idiot at least" (P6, 2022). From this statement, we can see that the pandemic and the following digital changes have allowed the participant to expand her own knowledge and capacity.

Further, some of the answers from the participants also suggest that their motivation to adapt to the changes of the pandemic could be seen as autonomous extrinsic. Several of the participants voice that they because of the digital changes have spent more time supervising their students, as well as

helping their colleagues. P2 states that due to digital expertise numerous colleagues have asked about help, which has further led to an increase in motivation: “It is motivational for me when colleagues come by and ask for help with little things that I find easy.” (P2, 2022).

Although the main motivational factor suggests that their motivation is mainly intrinsic or autonomous extrinsic, one of the participants expresses that the pandemic has made her motivation become more controlled and oriented towards external incentives. P6 states that due to the changes and lack of support from the university an attitude about whether the university gives anything more than payment has arisen: “[…] you become a bit like “what am I going to do with them without getting paid” (P6, 2022).

4.2.2 Self-determination theory (SDT)

SDT is based on the principle that the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamental for people´s autonomous motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the following section, emphasis will therefore be placed on how these three basic psychological needs have been affected by the pandemic and the following digital changes.

4.2.2.1 Competence

The feeling that one can succeed and grow is seen as essential for people's motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Hence, it is interesting to investigate whether the pandemic and the following digital changes have resulted in more challenges and affected the academics opportunity to grow at the workplace. Answers from the interviews show that the participants generally have managed to deal with the digital challenges from the pandemic in a good manner. P4 exemplifies this as follows: “It [using the digital tools] was not difficult. […]. But, no, there was no challenge, and I did not have to ask anyone for help” (P4, 2022). P2 reinforces this statement, by stating that she has become more efficient because of the digital changes: “I have become more efficient, there is no doubt about that” (P2, 2022). Based on P4 and P2 answers, along with other answers, it is expressed that this ability to cope with

these digital challenges occurs from good digital competence and previous experience with working from home.

Additionally, P2 even expresses that the implementation of digital changes has given her an opportunity to use other capabilities and implement own interests in the everyday work: "[…] I have been able to use more of the interest I have had in acquiring digital skills […]. This is a part of me that has joined my job here at the university to a greater extent during the pandemic" (P2, 2022). This illustrates that the pandemic and the digital changes actually have given the participant a feeling of growth at the workplace. The same feeling of growth is also expressed by P6. As mentioned earlier, she states that the implementation and usage of digital tools has given her a feeling of mastery. Consequently, giving the participant a feeling that she can succeed with her work regardless of the circumstances.

Although, most of the participants expressed that they managed to deal with the digital challenges in a good manner. Several of them emphasizes the interaction with students as a challenge that have been hard to cope with: "The big downside with the digital is that you miss the interaction […]" (P3, 2022). As a result of this challenge, it is mentioned that the teaching has become more difficult, and it has become harder to get necessary feedback. P4 exemplifies this as follow:

> Yeah, so I like to teach interactively. That means when I teach, I ask students for feedback […]. You cannot do that now. You can have breakout sessions of course – but that is not the same […]. And just the interaction is just so much better in class compared to digitally. (P4, 2022).

4.2.2.2 Autonomy

As a result of the pandemic, the academics had no choice but to implement the digital changes and remote work. However, when asked about how these imposed changes affected their workday and the implementation of work tasks, all participants express that they still experienced a sense of ownership in their work. Structuring of the working day, choice of digital tools to use in their teaching, and the teaching itself are highlighted as parts of the work they could largely determine themselves: "[…] how I chose to run the actual teaching I

had full control over. And no one decided for me to put it that way. […]. But we were imposed that it [the teaching] should be digital." (P3, 2022). P2 even expresses that she, because of the pandemic and the following digital changes, has experienced more ownership of her teaching than before: "I feel that I have gained more ownership of the teaching" (P2, 2022). An experience that is amplified by P1 who states that the changes have made him start looking for new opportunities and test new things in his workday:

> It [the pandemic] may have opened a little more thoughts about other possibilities. I think that before the pandemic we were a bit on such a track where we only do it like that since we have always done it like that. […] And the opportunity to just test new things I think has changed during the pandemic (P1, 2022).

Further, several of the academics also mention that their workday has become more flexible because of the changes from the pandemic. Participants highlighted in particular the opportunity to work remotely as an important factor for this increased flexibility. P1 and P4 demonstrate this as follows: "The fact you have an opportunity to successfully work both from home and at the workplace, it increases flexibility." (P1, 2022) and "An advantage is that you have more flexibility, you can work from home." (P4, 2022). Additionally, P2 mentions the opportunity to participate in meetings digitally rather than physically as a positive effect of the changes: "It is also motivating to be able to participate digitally in meetings if it suits me better. That you manage your workday yourself." (P2, 2022). A statement several of the other participants agreed with, as digital meetings reduced time spent on traveling and planning and gave them more time and energy to do other work tasks. However, some of the participants at times felt that there was almost too much flexibility:

> There is an enormous flexibility for better and for worse. There were some problems with the boundary setting. Especially in the first semester when the pandemic started, as we did everything for the students. Or were totally accessible to them (P6, 2022).

4.2.2.3 Relatedness

As mentioned earlier, the participants have expressed that the pandemic and the following digital changes have made it hard to maintain social relations at their workplace. Yet, it emerges from several of them that their attitude and sense of belonging at the workplace have not been affected by the situation. P1 and P3

states the following: “I still like it [the job] very much and it [my attitude] has not changed” (P1, 2022) and “No, I cannot say that. I would say that I perceive myself just as committed, dedicated, and interested in the job as before the pandemic” (P3, 2022). Furthermore, P2 expresses that her sense of belonging has increased due to the changes: “Absolutely, I like it [the job] better now really” (P2, 2022). The same reinforcing effect is voiced by P7, who states that she has become more involved: “Ohh, the commitment may have become even better” (P7, 2022).

However, there are also participants that have experienced a negative effect on their sense of belonging due to the loss of physical contact with their colleagues: “Yeah, it made it [my sense of belonging] much worse. Because everyone was working from home most of the time, so you don't have many interactions except from meetings online” (P4, 2022). A similar experience is conveyed by P6 and P8, who voice that the pandemic has made them become less connected to their colleagues and workplace: “I notice that I am so distant, and that is very strange for me.” (P6, 2022) and “[…] When you meet colleagues less, you become less connected. I cannot fully explain it, but the sense of belonging is weakened in a way” (P8, 2022). Furthermore, P6 expresses that this distance has had a negative impact on her loyalty to the workplace: “The loyalty to the workplace has become very damaged” (P6, 2022).

Although it is expressed that the pandemic has made it harder to maintain relationships, some of the participants stated that they have become more connected with colleagues working in other geographical locations. P5 points out that the employees from different campus become closer and more equivalent due to the pandemic and the following digital changes:

> I think we have come closer. We are […] campuses, so the pandemic has made employees in […] as close as employees in […]. So, then you get a different contact surface than before […]. Everyone was somehow equal digitally (P5, 2022)

P7 expresses the same experience: “[…] I have gained closer contact with the colleagues who sit in […] and […]. But perhaps the ones I had the most contact with at my campus have I of course had less contact with.” (P7, 2022).

Through these statements, the participants expresses that the digital changes have functioned as a tool to create connections between the academics and colleagues they normally would not have had.

4.2.3 Job demands-resource model (JD-R)

Throughout the interviews it was discovered several ways the pandemic and the following digital changes reformed the work environment of the academics. Having to drastically transform all teaching into a digital format is a common stressor that is mentioned. P1 elaborates on how this was experienced: "Especially the first semester of 2020. The spring and the preparation for the fall, it was very stressful. Because it was just searching in the dark. We did not know if it was going to work or not" (P1, 2022). Two common words when describing the first period during the pandemic are "stress" and "exhaustion". Several of the academics voiced that this period was particularly hard for them to overcome because of the demanding conditions at work. P7 explains how demanding the situation was:

> It's been pretty tough. I have most of my teaching in the autumn, so I am kind of overflowing with teaching that time of year. So, the autumn of 2020 was quite heavy. There were a couple of things that happened at home as well, so it all piled up. So, I feel that I'm still a little exhausted, I have not fully recovered after the autumn of 2020. […]. So yes, it is clear that it has been tough (P7, 2022).

P8 states that the preparation for digital teaching was challenging, and that she did not bother to fully convert her lecture program to fit digital teaching: "So I have a lecture program that I have used before, and sure I should have changed it to a good break out room solution, but I felt that this could be very time consuming" (P8, 2022). The participant further elaborates on having to convert her lectures into digital ones:

> I have used the old layout, I have had the same type of lectures, they have only been digital. And I do not think it was any less demanding to make a digital than to make a physical lecture, perhaps on the contrary. Because it must be planned for a new format. So, I do not think it [teaching] has become any more effective. (P8, 2022)

Further, P8 told us that her workplace decided that the academics had to start streaming their physical lectures, even though the activity at campus was

beginning to return to normal. She explains how she experienced having to stream her lectures and how it made her stressed:

> When you in a way know that it is being streamed and recorded, it suddenly becomes terribly uncomfortable because things can come out in a completely different way than you had thought. […] It gets psychologically in the sense that you get stressed and tense in a situation that really requires that you are not (P8, 2022).

She earlier stated that lecturing through Zoom was a terrible experience and tells us that: "I think that streaming is even worse than Zoom" (P8, 2022). P5 is further elaborating on how lecturing through zoom and having to engage in digital teaching was demanding: "Sitting in front of a PC when you usually have been able to walk around and engage with the students, it becomes a completely different inspiration. In addition, suddenly all you see is completely black screens. Yes, it is depressing" (P5, 2022). The "black screens" the participant is talking about is when students choose not to show their faces via camera during the digital classes. P8 also agrees that "black screens" are having a negative influence on their energy during their teaching: "Zoom is terribly demanding as you have to talk to an empty room for two hours" (P8, 2022).

Although, having to adopt the digital changes and restructure the way of teaching was experienced as stressful and demanding for several of the academics. It is expressed that this level of stress gradually decreased throughout the pandemic. This is indicated by P3 when asked about whether he has felt stressed about the current situation at work: "I am not [stressed now]. If you had asked me around March 2020, I would probably have been considerably more stressed" (P3, 2022).

Further, several participants communicated that the digital changes made their work less demanding and supported them in achieving work related goals. A small part of the participants expressed this positive effect instantly after the digital changes were implemented, and some experienced these effects after a period of adaptation and training. P1 is expressing in the following quote that fulfilling the full potential of these changes took time, and that certain parts of his work have become easier with the implementation of digital tools:

> I think that it was very difficult at first, but now that we have done it several times, I would say that the lectures and working with the groups has become easier with the use of the digital tools. And it has become easier to get in touch with colleagues. And to get a guest lecture since they do not have to travel here (P1, 2022).

P1 also suggests that digital tools have made his main course less demanding: "Yes, I think that the course [...] is a big part of my job, and I would say it has become easier" (P1, 2022). P6 earlier expressed that lecturing with the use of digital tools was perceived as unfitting and thereby made it difficult to carry out the lectures in a good way. However, P6 is pleased with how digital tools have added value to other parts of her work:

> I think that it has been great and completely unproblematic to supervise students on their theses [digitally]. I think that is super-efficient. The same goes for meetings. I have saved an incredible amount of energy and time in digital meetings, so I think it's great. So, I think it's really positive (P6, 2022).

This positivity regard digital tools for other parts of the work beside lecturing, is also stated by P8: "I said at the beginning that I think it has become a little more effective, when being digital. It's about not needing these relocations all the time; you can take short and quick meetings on zoom" (P8, 2022).

Further, many of the academics mentioned that the digital changes gave them the opportunity to record and thereby reuse easy-going lectures or course introductions. P8 shows this with the following statement: "We started to record some lectures with topics that are lectured every year – such general things. I think that is practical, if we spend some time on it, we will not have to do that lecture again next year" (P8, 2022).

4.3 Effects on work-life balance

During the interviews the academics were questioned about how working remotely impacted their leisure time and how they handled having their workplace relocated into their homes. Several of the participants addressed that they already had a flexible workday with the opportunity to work remotely before the pandemic. Moreover, these participants stated that their earlier knowledge with partially working remotely aided them during the situation. P7

exemplifies this as follows: “Not such a big deal. I am used to this [remote work], I have worked like this for really long time” (P7, 2022).

However, several of the participants did feel that moving the office into the home affected the work-life balance. P5 elaborates this in the following quote:

> […] The longer we needed to work from home, the more difficult it was to balance. I like it better now as I have another physical place, where you leave when the clock is 5 […]. Then it's not such a bad feeling when I just ignore notifications. Because I know at half past eight in the morning I will be back in the office, and then I can answer (P5, 2022).

The participant is expressing that working remotely has made the work-life balance more unclear. P6 also states that the work-life balance got blurred: “It has been a bit difficult, but at the same time it went well. But less distinction [between work and leisure], yeah absolutely” (P6, 2022). Further, P7 expressed that the whole situation and just not working remotely affected the work-life balance. She said that the difficult situation made it problematic to set boundaries regarding her work hours:

> Now it's somehow easier to say that situation is so fucked up. Because of this I can have student meetings from 5-10 in the evening if they [students] are interested in it. Because you feel sorry for everyone all the time. So, it is difficult to set boundaries, absolutely (P7, 2022).

The participant also expressed that the pandemic made her feel sorry for others, which also made it difficult to hold back on working hours. When first asked about managing the work-life balance, she stated that this was something she struggled with before the pandemic: “What is that? Haha. I've never been particularly good at that [managing the work-life balance]” (P7, 2022).

Further, P3 also agrees with the blurry work-life balance during the pandemic: “If someone called, you went straight back to work.” (P3, 2022). He further states that during the pandemic he felt that: “I always needed to be online” (P3, 2022) However during the pandemic, he learned to become better at managing the work-life balance:

> There is one thing I feel I have learned. When I shut down the PC, a message or notification should be incredibly important for me to answer. And it is not that I immediately shut down at 4 o'clock, but when I shut down, the workday is over (P3, 2022).

This learning experience is also expressed by P8, who states that she has learned to become better at managing work-life balance because of the pandemic:

> I have been - and I might have become better at it during the pandemic. Before I tended to work a lot, and especially when you have deadlines and things like that, you work an awful lot all the time. But during the pandemic I had to learn to set clear boundaries (P8, 2022).

4.4 The "new normal" of academics

This part of the findings will elaborate on the academics´ own thoughts and interpretations of the use of digital tools and remote work in the future. All our participants are agreeing that they will carry with them some of the aspects of the pandemic into their future work situation. Generally, there is an overall very positive perception of the use of digital tools and working remotely in conjunction with meetings and work regarding research. P1 and P8 exemplifies this as follow: "We will also continue to have the opportunity to work from home, and that is good because it provides flexibility. But I will not be forced to do so" (P1, 2022) and "I will continue with home office, there is no doubt about that. Digital opportunities such as Zoom, I will use for meetings, as it works well." (P8, 2022). One participant suggests that the pandemic clearly has changed people's perception of working remotely:

> I feel it has become more approved to be digital. You do not get that feeling of shame if you do not travel to work […]. it is better that you work at home, so you save yourself some travel time […]. (P2, 2022).

Conversely, it is not as one-sided when comparing how the academics envision how these changes will impact the teaching part of their work. P4 is convinced that conventional physical teaching is best: "yeah, things have become a little bit different. And I think it will be good if it goes back to normal. Yeah, I don't think it [digital teaching] was a great success." (P4, 2022). P7 also states that physical teaching is the best, but she wants to: "use what we have learned [about digital teaching], and use it actively and better" (P7, 2022). Additionally, P8 raises some concerns about making everything digital available, and she fears that it could negatively affect the students:

> Maybe we're doing them [students] a disfavor by making it too flexible, because I think it's important that the university is a place where you meet, and that it continues to be a place where you meet […] so I'm a

> little skeptical of the tendency to think that everything will be available digitally. […]. There are arguments that students can more easily combine work and studies and things like that. But no, I'm a little skeptical of that development, but at the same time I see that there are many positive things […] (P8, 2022)

However, P1 states that digital teaching is better for certain courses: “We will absolutely continue. We want to try and use the right tools for the right purposes. Now it is a suitable tool for that purpose, and for a [...] lecture it is best for us with Zoom.” (P1, 2022). P3 is also having this opinion that certain courses could be converted to digital format: “Eventually we must probably do some subjects digitally. So, I do not think the future is black and white, I do not think it is digital or campus. I think it is a mixture of digital, hybrid and campus" (P3, 2022).

When elaborating on digital teaching in the future, P4 came up with a noteworthy statement:

> The main point we discovered was that the digitalization or the digital teaching was not just digital teaching, it was digital teaching with a lot of interruptions and a lot of uncertainties, and therefore we cannot make any strong conclusion on digital teaching. Because it was a quite special digital teaching. (P4, 2022).

The participant states that we cannot draw any strong conclusions about whether digital teaching is appropriate in the future because of the extraordinary situation with the pandemic. Hence, the participant suggest that digital teaching needs to be experienced and tried under “normal circumstances” to determine how well it really functions.

5. Discussion

In the following chapter, our main findings will be discussed and elaborated in accordance with the theoretical framework. This will contribute to a deeper understanding of our empirical material, and thus help us answering the thesis' research question:

How has the Covid-19 pandemic and the following digital changes affected academics' motivation and well-being in higher education in Norway?

Further, the chapter will end with a discussion of how our findings are relevant for the future work of academics, and whether the "new normal" is the way of working going forward.

5.1 Perception of the change

Our findings suggest that the academics' reaction to the pandemic and the following digital changes varied from negative, neutral, to positive. The academics that expressed either a neutral or positive reaction seems to cope with the situation well because of their previous experience with working digital and remote. However, our findings indicates that the negative reactions to the digital changes were associated with uncertainty. We believe this uncertainty could be seen in context of that the pandemic was an extraordinary situation, with lack of sufficient time for preparation (Li et al., 2021). We see that this lack of time for preparation formed obstacles that made it hard for the academics to cope with some changes (Rafferty & Griffin, 2006). For instance, some struggled with converting their lecturing from physical to digital, while other struggled with their work-life balance.

It occurs from our findings that the communication and information during the pandemic and the following digital changes have been crucial. Lewin (1947) states that communication is important because it enables employees to move on with changes. An interesting observation is that the academics are not consistent in how they valued the same ways of receiving information about the changes. For instance, some participants found learning by descriptive e-mails and/or tutorial videos convenient, while others found them poorly for this purpose. This suggests that how the information was communicated has been

vital for how the academics have been able to cope with pandemic and the following digital changes. A suggestion, that is supported by Jacobsen and Thorsvik (2014), who states that high-quality communication requires that the choice of communication channel fits the message to be conveyed. Further, the findings also illustrate that participants who experienced an insufficient amount of information, felt left on their own. Hence, both the quality and amount of communication and information may be an explanatory factor for why some of the academics has felt an impact on their motivation and well-being.

According to Karp (2014), it is vital for leaders to create arenas where employees can participate and share their opinions, as this will form motivated employees that want to participate in the changes process. Correspondingly, our findings indicate the same motivating effect on academics. Several academics stated that being involved in joint meetings with colleagues and discussing the practical aspects of digital teaching and tools have been perceived as useful and motivating. Correspondingly with previous research, these academics spoke great beliefs about the digital changes and how this enhanced their work (Wanberg & Banas, 2000). The importance of involving the academics in such collaborations is further reinforced as some of the academics aired frustration about their leaders not facilitating such meetings and other methods of sharing knowledge. To neglect participation as a convenient measure seems to have made the academics lose out of the potential benefits and the experience of efficacy regarding some of the new digital tools posed by the digital change (Mckay et al., 2013). Further this is seen to have had a negative effect on their ability to cope with the changes.

As communication and involvement could be considered supportive actions, the support the academics have received during the pandemic have played a crucial role in their perception of the change. Our findings indicates that the academics that felt supported by their supervisors felt motivated to take on the digital changes, while those who did not feel supported experienced a reduction in their willingness to embrace the change process. Hence, support from supervisors could be seen as a resource that motivated and helped the academics cope with the pandemic and the following digital changes.

Moreover, several of the academics wanted to emphasize the importance of their respective IT-departments during this period. The academics expressed that they provided information and guidance that was necessary for them to adapt to the changes. This implies that the IT-department have been perceived as an important resource, alongside the supervisors.

5.2 Motivational factors and performance

As it emerges from the findings, our sample is more motivated by intrinsic than extrinsic factors. Based on Deci and Ryan´s (2000) definition of intrinsic motivation, this implies that the academics are motivated by inherent interests, where the work tasks are seen as rewards themselves, rather than external incentives. That their relationship with students and colleagues are highlighted as their main motivational factor consider them as intrinsic motivated. This is because the academics express that they want to help students and be a part of a work community out of personal interests and enjoyment, and not because they are getting external rewards for it. Further, it is an interesting observation that the motivational factor of social relations seems to have had a positive effect on the academics' willingness to learn and adapt to the digital changes from the pandemic. Because of the circumstances, the academics had no choice but to implement and learn the new digital tools to maintain social relations and work tasks. Hence, the task of learning and implementing the digital changes was seen as a motivation itself.

In the findings, we did find that the pandemic and the following digital changes has had mainly negative but also some positive effects on the academics social relations. Although digital tools such as Zoom and Teams have made it possible to conduct teaching and maintain relations, many participants express that they have become more distant and experienced a loss in social relations. The restrictions and injunction of home office has led to lack of physical presence between the academics and their colleagues and students, and informal conversations are mentioned as almost absent. Because of this, several participants express that this has had a negative effect on their sense of belonging, which indicates a loss in the basic psychological need of relatedness (Ryan et al., 2019). However, it also emerges that the pandemic and the

following digital changes has had some positive effect on their social relations and relatedness. Two of the participants voice that they have experienced an increase in their sense of belonging, and several express that certain relationships have improved due to the pandemic and digital changes. For instance, from our findings it seems that the pandemic and the following digital changes have made stronger connections between the academics and colleagues working in other geographical locations. However, the academics clearly express that the pandemic and following digital changes generally have had a more negative than positive effect on social relations as a motivational factor. Hence, it seems like the pandemic and following digital changes have decreased the academics relatedness, which is a finding that supports the research of Rietveld et al. (2021).

Further, the findings from Rietveld et al. (2021) suggests that the pandemic and the following digital changes have increased the academics basic psychological needs of competence and autonomy. In our findings, we found that the participants generally possess a high degree of digital competence or had previous experience with working remotely, and thus managed to deal with the digital challenges in a good manner. Participants express that the digital changes have made them grow at the workplace, by giving them a feeling of mastery and opportunity to implement personal interests in their everyday work. This feeling of growth at the workplace, indicates that the pandemic and the following digital changes have increased the academics competence. However, it is important to address that some of the academics have experienced lack of feedback from their students because of the pandemic and the digital changes, which is an important factor in the basic need of competence (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Although this lack of feedback seems to have made teaching a bit more inefficient, our findings suggest that the feeling of growth at the workplace and success in implementing the digital challenges outweigh this. Hence, our findings indicate that the academics have experienced an increase in their basic need for competence.

According to Ryan et al. (2019), the basic need of autonomy concerns a sense of initiative and ownership in one´s action. From our findings, it occurs that the

pandemic and the following digital changes has made certain work tasks become more self-determined and increased the flexibility of the academics´ workday. The opportunity to work remotely and participate in meetings digitally rather than physically are seen as motivating, as it gives the academics more time and energy to do other work tasks. That the pandemic and the following digital changes have increased the academics flexibility and given them more space to make their own decisions, indicates an increase in their autonomy. However, some of the academics express that this increased flexibility and autonomy was a bit overwhelming. Several have experienced that the work-life balance has been damaged, and that the boundary between work and leisure have become more unclear. A reasoning for this seems to be that the equipment and tools one needs to work were nearby and more accessible, and thereby made it easier to put in extra hours. Yet, our findings suggest that this boundary became clearer over the course of the pandemic, as the academics managed to form habits. Based on this, our findings are seen to indicate the same effect on the SDT´s as Rietveld et al. (2021) did in their research. Which is that the pandemic and the following digital changes has resulted in an increase in the academics' autonomy and competence, as well as a decrease in relatedness.

5.2.1 JD-R

The JD-R framework suggests that higher job demands lead to strain and health impairment (Schaufeli & Toon, 2014). When confronted with higher job demands, employees either accept a reduction in their performance with no increase in costs, or they implement performance protection strategies that are related to extra costs (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Our findings indicate that the academics were exposed to a lot of stress and exhaustion at the beginning of the pandemic. The sudden introduction of the pandemic and the following digital changes resulted in an increase in job demands, as this was a completely change in their way of working, none of them really was prepared for. This made it necessary for the academics to use time and energy on learning the new digital tools to manage this "new normal". Thus, it seems that adapting to the new digital ways of working at the start of the pandemic was commonly demanding, and that it for several led to extra costs in the form of stress and

exhaustion. Further, it is reasonable to assume that this impairment of health was related to the academics striving to uphold their performance in their work. However, it was also some participants that indicated that in order to deal with the higher job demands, they accepted a reduction in their performance, rather than using resources or extra costs to manage them.

Nevertheless, we generally perceive that the job demands got reduced when the academics got acquainted with and got a hold of the full potential of the digital tools. From our findings, we see resources such as supervisor support, involvement, good communication, high digital competence, and increased autonomy helped to enable this, and that the digital tools after a while altered into a job resource that was contributory in accomplishing work goals (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Additionally, is seems like the digital tools have also been a useful resource in reducing future workload for the academics. However, there was still some discomfort with some parts of the digital format, such as lack of physical presence, having to stream lectures, and lecturing digitally without the student showing their faces on camera. These aspects need to be considered, as they could possibly lead to impairment of the academics´ health and burnout (Hockey, 1997).

5.3 Conceptual model

Based on the discussion above, we will now present a conceptual model of the pandemic´s effect on the academics´ motivation and well-being. This model is inspired by the JD-R model and shows the perceived connection between the main findings of this study.

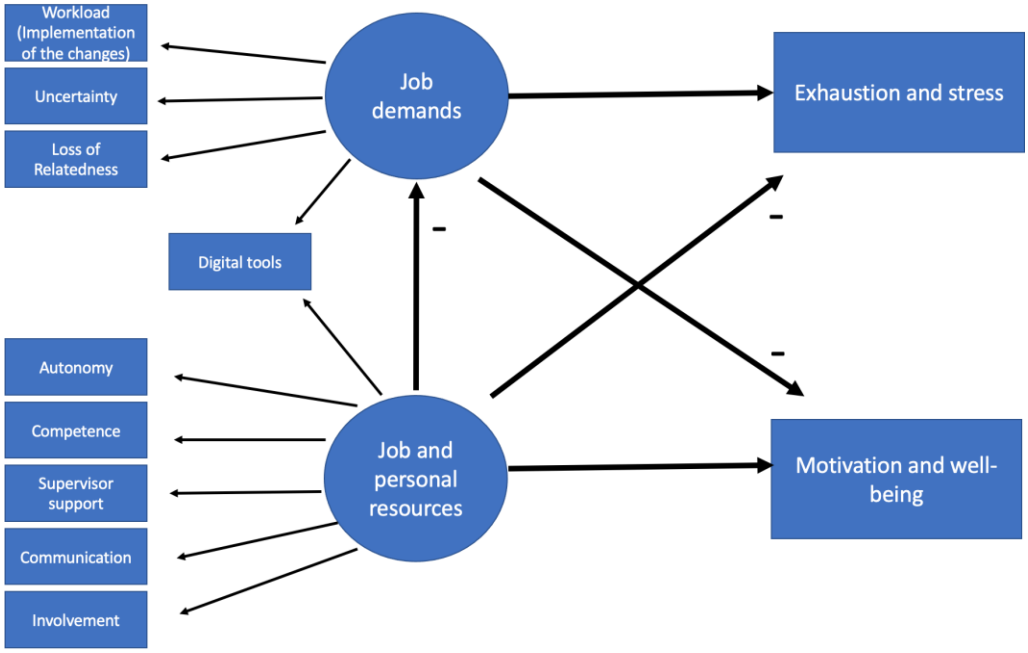

Figure 2: Conceptual model

From our findings and discussion, we suggest that both the academics perception of the pandemic and the following digital changes, as well as the effects on their SDT´s have influenced their job demands and resources. Loss of relatedness, an increased workload, implementation of new digital tools and uncertainty regarding the situation, are all aspects of the pandemic that are seen to have increased the academics job demands. Conversely, increased autonomy and competence, as well as a high degree of involvement, good communication and supervisor support are all aspects, that have worked as a resource to cope with the extraordinary situation. Furthermore, our findings and discussion showed that the academics experienced a lot of stress and exhaustion at the start of the pandemic, due to increased job demands. However, as the pandemic progressed, these job demands got reduced by the resources and learning the full potential of the digital tools. As the model suggest digital tools than altered into a job resource. Moreover, this reduction in job demands and increase in resources seems to have had a positive effect on the academics´ motivation and well-being.

5.4 The “new normal” of academics

When being forced to go through unplanned changes, two of the main outcomes should be to turn the situation into an opportunity and maximize the

potential benefits (Schermerhorn et al., 2003). Our research suggests that the pandemic and the following digital changes have provided the academics with both great opportunities and benefits that they want to bring onward and keep in their future work. Nevertheless, our research also determines some factors that need to be considered when shaping this “new normal” of working.

Some aspects from the pandemic the academics perceive as beneficial and wants to keep and in their “new normal” is the opportunity to work remotely and use digital tools. The opportunity to work remotely and implementation of digital tools, is said to have had a positive effect on the efficiency and quality of meetings, research, and some aspects of teaching, as well as their flexibility. We assume that this is because the academics are experiencing themselves as more self-determined, and that the opportunity to work remotely is giving them the space and chance to make their own decisions (Ryan et al., 2019). Further, we insinuate that the opportunity to work remotely and use digital tools should not be withdrawn, since autonomy is fundamental for people´s motivation and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Therefore, we suggest that academics should continue to have this flexibility to work remotely and have the freedom to use digital tools in their “new normal”. However, our findings suggest that it needs to be an appropriate fit between the courses and the digital tools in order for it to be beneficial. Hence, there needs to be a thorough evaluation of how suitable certain courses are for digital teaching. Based on this, we perceive that the academic “new normal” will consist of a hybrid solution, with both physical and digital teaching.

However, a concern regarding this increased flexibility in the “new normal” is how this is going to affect the academics' social relations. As our findings indicate, social relations are seen as the academics’ main motivational factor, and that the pandemic and the following digital changes resulted in a generally negative effect on this motivational factor. Therefore, it is important that academics and universities find a golden mean between these two factors so that one does not negatively affect the other.

Summarizing this discussion and our findings about the academics´ “new normal”, they want to have the opportunity to work remotely when this is

suitable. The main argument for maintaining this opportunity is that it provides flexibility and efficiency in their workday. On the contrary, the thoughts around using digital teaching in the future are not as unambiguous. These thoughts ranged from discontinuing digital teaching, to hybrid solutions, to fully implementing this into certain courses. However, it is recognized that universities must aim to further facilitate physical attendance for both students and staff to create professional development.

6. Limitations, implications, and future research

6.1 Limitations

Before starting and during the work on this thesis, we became aware that there would be some limitations regarding the research method and area. This is mainly because there was limited previous research on the topic, and our knowledge about it was somewhat narrow, as the research topic we wanted to explore is only two years old.

The main limitation was that there was a lack of previous literature conducted on our research topic. As the pandemic started only two years ago, it is not until recently that is begun to emerge research on the impact the pandemic has had on employee's motivation and well-being. Although, literature have started to be published on the topic, there are limited studies that research this topic from academics' point of view. Hence, there was little foundation for us to compare and rely on.

Another limitation with our thesis relates to the time perspective. Based on our previous knowledge we saw it as necessary to create a foundation regarding the topic, to fully understand it before we started our research. This process together with the execution, transcription, and analysis of the interviews have been time and resource consuming. This has resulted in less time for the main purpose of the thesis, which is the research itself.

Our thesis uses qualitative in-depth interviews as the primary data source. With this method, we as researchers have a prominent role through interaction and interpretation. In such interviews, the synergy between the researcher and the participant can affect what kind of information the participant decides to share, which can cause a source of error to occur (Gripsrud et al., 2018). Another potential limitation is our use of sound recording during the interviews, since this can hurt the quality of the information that is given. This is because the usage of sound recording could affect the reliability in their answers, as they are aware that what they are saying are recorded (Rutakumwa et al., 2020). However, this tends to be forgotten as the interview progress (Repstad, 2014).

Lastly, it is also important to point out that the restrictions and degree to which the academics have been working from home has also changed and varied between locations during the pandemic. This may have resulted in different interpretations of the situation at different points in time. Hence, the academics' use of selective memory can have had an impact on the results of this study (Saunders, 2013).

6.2 Implications

Despite the limitations in this thesis, our findings might provide implications for universities and academics considering the use of remote work, digital tools and their motivation and well-being. Several researchers predict that the use of remote work and digital tools will continue after the pandemic (Galanti et al., 2021; Lund, et al., 2021). Based on this, our findings could help leaders and universities to best facilitate this "new normal" of working for academics. In addition, some of our findings might be transferable to lower levels of education, such as high school.

It is essential to take into consideration that people have different preferences, and what one person regards as well-functioning and efficient, others might find inappropriate. Our findings indicate that the eight academics have experienced the use of digital tools and remote work differently. While some express that they want to have the changes from the pandemic as their "new normal", others express that they would rather go back to the physical workday prior to it. Based on this, it seems that giving academics freedom to determine their workday and working methods themselves rather than force them to work in a certain way should be emphasized. This is because it can lead to an increase in motivation and well-being, as the academics experience more autonomy over their work (Ryan et al., 2019).

Further, in line with the JD-R model, it seems crucial to provide academics with sufficient resources to successfully implement and maximize the quality of digital tools (Demerouti et al., 2001). Based on our findings, we assume that there is a gap in digital competence among the eight academics, and it is reasonable to assume that there are academics with both better and worse

digital competence than our sample. Hence, it is necessary that the universities and leaders manage to provide each academic with sufficient resources so everyone can manage to use the digital tools. Examples of such resources can be: support from the IT-department, feedback, training courses, and using different channels for communication.

This study suggest that the eight academics viewed their social relations with students and colleagues as their main motivational factor, and that this factor has been weakened because of the pandemic and the following digital changes. The introduction of digital tools and the injunction of remote work made it hard to maintain and create new relations. This resulted in several of the academics experiencing a reduction in their relatedness towards their universities. Based on this, the universities and their leaders should take action to facilitate social relations at the workplace and be cautious about academics who show signs or express feelings of missing social relations. Since relatedness is one of their basic psychological needs and is crucial for their motivation and well-being at the workplace (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

6.3 Future research

To extend the findings of this study, future research could aim to make more generalizable results about how the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected academics motivation and well-being. By conducting a quantitative study of a larger sample, researchers could find patterns and casual relationships that can extend or contradict our findings. This will give a more general picture of how the pandemic and the following digital changes have affected academics motivation and well-being.

Further research could also emphasize change management and leaders´ approaches to facilitating good arenas for implementing unplanned changes among their employees. From our findings, we can see how important an arena with good communication and support is for a successful implementation of unplanned changes. Hence, we suggest that future research could conduct studies on the leader’s perspective and their experience of the pandemic. This

could give valuable insights on how to manage unplanned changes, and how to make employees willing and motivated to change.

Moreover, as the pandemic has been an event with severe impact both on work and personal level, it is uncertain whether we can draw exact conclusions about the quality of digital teaching in this period. It is reasonable to assume that the whole situation and uncertainty with the pandemic have had some influence on academics' experience of their "new normal". Based on this, future research could explore this "new normal" and its impact on motivation and well-being in normal circumstances post pandemic. This might give a more accurate description of the effects and how the "new normal" is shaped, since it will exclude the uncertainties regarding the pandemic which could have impacted our findings.

7.0 Summary

This thesis contributes to the literature on the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on employee´s motivation and well-being. We aimed to provide a thesis that contributes and expands the literature in these fields by investigating the effects the COVID-19 pandemic and the following digital changes have had on the motivation and well-being of eight academics in Norway.

The current study indicates that the pandemic and the following digital changes have had both positive and negative effects on the eight academics motivation and well-being, and that they want to adapt certain aspects of the pandemic in their "new normal". There were clear findings that the participants experienced stress and exhaustion at the start of the pandemic, as the digital changes resulted in a sudden increase in job demands. However, the findings indicate that resources such as supervisor support, involvement, and good digital competence helped reduce these demands as the pandemic progressed, and that the digital tools after a while altered into a job resource. Further, there were findings that the academics experienced a loss in their main motivational factor, social relations, because of the pandemic and the following digital changes. On the other hand, the findings also indicates that the pandemic and the following digital changes resulted in more flexibility and autonomy in the workday. These findings might encourage further research regarding our topic and the fields of motivation and well-being. Further, there are solid arguments for focusing on the "new normal" of academics, and whether the future should be digital, physical or hybrid.

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8.0 Appendices

Appendix 1

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

How digitalization as an unplanned and emergent change have impacted employee's motivation and job-satisfaction.

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å **Formålet med prosjektet er å identifisere hvordan de pålagte endringene i arbeidsmetoder og arbeidsoppgaver pandemien har medført har endret arbeidsmotivasjon og tilfredshet i jobben.** I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Denne masteroppgaven har som formål å identifisere hvordan de pålagte endringene i arbeidsmetoder og arbeidsoppgaver pandemien har medført har endret arbeidsmotivasjon og tilfredshet i jobb hos ansatte.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

- **Handelshøyskolen BI** er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Du er en av et utvalg på 12 personer som får invitasjon til å delta i dette forskningsprosjektet. Vi har sendt en henvendelse til din arbeidsgiver angående deltakelse i prosjektet og deretter fått kontaktopplysninger om deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

- Dersom du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du sier deg villig til at vi intervjuer deg om hvordan du har opplevd de nevnte endringene i arbeidshverdagen din gjennom pandemien. Dette intervjuet vil ca. vare i 45 minutter. Spørsmålene vil omhandle hvordan endringer i arbeidsmetoder, organisering og arbeidsoppgaver har påvirket deg. Det vil blitt gjort lydopptak av intervjuet. Lydopptaket vil bli slettet ved prosjektslutt.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- De som vil ha tilgang til dine opplysninger ved Handelshøyskolen BI er veileder Mette Marthinussen Aanes samt studentene Jørgen Unneland Larsen og Andreas Kolseth.
- Det er ingen av dine opplysninger eller utsagn som vil ikke kunne bli gjenkjent i publikasjonen av masteroppgaven.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?
Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, som etter planen er 1. juli 2022. Opplysninger om deg samt lydopptak vil bli slettet umiddelbart etter prosjektslutt.

Dine rettigheter
Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:
- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Handelshøyskolen BI har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

Handelshøyskolen BI ved Mette Aanes Marthinussen (Tlf: 4799494258) (Mail: mette.m.aanes@bi.no)
Vårt personvernombud: Vibeke Nesbakken (personvernombud@bi.no.)

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:
- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Mette Aanes Marthinussen (Forsker/veileder)	Jørgen Unneland Larsen og Andreas Kolseth (Studenter)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «*How digitalization as an unplanned and emergent change have impacted employees motivation and job-satisfaction*». og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

☐ å delta i intervju

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix 2

Intervjuguide

Introduksjon

1. Informasjon om:
    a. Tema, bakgrunn, og formål
    b. Redegjøre for taushetsplikt
    c. Spør informanten om noe er uklart
    d. Informere om opptak, og spørre om samtykke til opptak
        i. Starte opptaket
2. Hvor lenge har du jobbet i organisasjonen?

Om endringen

3. Hva var det første du tenkte da du hørte at du måtte gå over til en mer digital hverdag som følge av pandemien?
4. Føler du at digitaliseringsprosessen og de digitale verktøyene introdusert under pandemien har medført store endringer i hvordan du gjennomfører og forholder deg til arbeidsoppgavene dine?
    a. Hvilke digitale verktøy og plattformer har blitt brukt under pandemien.
5. Hvordan har det vært for deg å sette deg inn i disse nye digitale verktøyene?
    a. Kjedelig/spennende/stressende?
    b. Hvordan har du klart det?
6. Opplever du at du har blitt distansert fra kjerneoppgavene dine, eller har disse blitt enklere å gjennomføre?
    a. Hvordan opplever du den distansen?
7. Hvilke metoder for opplæring, oppfølging, og formidling av informasjon har blitt brukt?
    a. Hvilke metoder mener du har fungert bra?
    b. Hvilke metoder mener du ikke har fungert bra?
8. Hvordan opplever du at ledelsen har virket i denne prosessen med tanke på opplæring, oppfølging og formidling av informasjon?
    a. Hvordan har kommunikasjonen vært, og til hvilken grad har du blitt involvert i denne prosessen?
9. Hvordan har denne prosessen påvirket din tilhørighet til organisasjonen og dine sosiale relasjoner til andre ansatte?

Motivasjon og ytelse

10. Kan du fortelle oss om hvordan du opplever at digitaliseringsprosessen og de digitale verktøyene som har blitt introdusert i pandemien har påvirket din effektivitet og ytelse?
    a. Har du opplevd en endring i arbeidskrav og forventninger med introduksjonen av de digitale verktøyene (enklere/vanskeligere)?
11. Hvordan har digitaliseringsprosessen påvirket dine muligheter til å foreta egne beslutninger i ditt arbeid?
    a. Kan du gi noen eksempler på en slik situasjon?
12. Hva vil du si motiverer deg mest i jobben og på arbeidsplassen?
    a. Opplever du at dette har endret seg gjennom pandemien og de digitale endringene den har medbragt? Hva?
    b. Hvis informanten ikke utdyper selv: Hvorfor?
13. Hvordan har hele denne prosessen påvirket trivsel og engasjementet ditt?
    a. Føler du deg mer stresset nå kontra situasjonen før pandemien?
14. Har jobbsituasjonen din påvirket andre livsområder?

<u>Organisatorisk område</u>

15. Hvordan har det vært for deg å styre arbeidshverdagen din i så stor grad?
    - Klart å skille mellom jobb og fritid
16. Hva tenker du at du burde gjort annerledes i organiseringen av arbeidshverdagen din?
    a. Tror du det ville ha forenklet prosessen med å arbeide digitalt?
17. I hvilken grad tenker du at du vil fortsette med muligheten hjemmekontor/ arbeide via digitale plattformer?

<u>Konklusjon</u>

- Totalt sett, har holdningen din til jobben din endret seg nå kontra før pandemien og de digitale endringene?
- Er det noe du tenker du kunne ha gjort annerledes under denne prosessen.
    - Hva eller hvorfor?
- Avsluttende kommentar fra informanten
- Spørre om kontaktinformasjon dersom vi skulle ha noen oppfølgingsspørsmål
- Tusen takk for bidrag!